

VITAL ECONOMY

JOHN. H. CLARKE, M.D.




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VITAL ECONOMY



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VITAL ECONOMY
OR HOW TO CONSERVE
YOUR STRENGTH

By JOHN H. CLARKE, M.D.

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PREFACE

IF the saying be true that an ordinary man is "either a fool or a physician at forty," I hold that it is at least equally true that a medical man is either a fool or a philosopher at fifty. Having passed this age-limit by a respectable margin, I feel myself justified in exposing to the world a few samples of such physicianly wisdom or folly as I have acquired in some thirty odd years of practice. Hence this book.

I put the physician's age of maturity later than that of the ordinary man, because the former has much more to go through than others before he can attain to a direct knowledge of the facts of life. In the earlier part of his career he is perforce in the hands of the authorities of his profession. He must learn to see things through their glasses, and

look at them in their way before he can be admitted to the ranks of the licensed : and many there be who never learn, or even endeavour, to look at them in any other way. Perhaps it is just as well for the public that this is so in the majority of cases ; but some are so constituted that they cannot go on doing this perpetually, especially if it dawns on their intelligence that the authorities are seldom able to agree among themselves.

In the few *causeries* of which this volume consists I rely on no authority save my own. I think I have observed a few things which it may be useful to make public. If I am mistaken, I do not wish the blame to be put on any one but myself.

My book is written not so much for the strong as for those who have no strength to spare. For those just persons who have no need of advice I have no message ; unless they happen to have the care of others less fortunately constituted than themselves. Then they may learn something useful from this book. I am writing primarily for that very large class of persons who have just

enough vitality to enable them to get through their duties by exercising due economy and no more. Among these I include those who are naturally delicate and those who are convalescing from acute illnesses. For all such persons—for those who are, in the stock phrase, “below par,” or only just up to it—economy in the expenditure of vital energy is of the first importance, and I think I can point out to them a few weak spots through which leakage may occur, a leakage which may be stopped when once its source is known.

One of the chapters of this work—that on “Fresh Air”—and parts of the chapter on “Tea” have already seen the light in the columns of the *Daily Chronicle*, to which journal I herewith make my acknowledgments.

JOHN H. CLARKE.

LONDON, *Sept.*, 1908.

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VITAL ECONOMY

CHAPTER I

VITAL ECONOMICS

"I have no other notion of economy than that it is the parent of liberty and ease."—SWIFT.

THERE is a department in the science of economics which the medical professoriate, it seems to me, have sadly neglected, and in the absence of a more competent exponent of the science, I am venturing to indicate the lines on which the study should be undertaken. I cannot claim that in so doing I am fulfilling a "long-felt want," for nobody, I regret to say, has hitherto shown any sign of wanting it, using the word "want" in the sense of desire. But in the other sense—the sense of need—the want has been experienced keenly enough, and if

I can awaken a sense of the need in anything like the degree in which it exists, we shall not remain long without professors of Vital Economics in all our great centres of learning.

Political economy, commercial economy, domestic economy, and economies of many other descriptions have had among their exponents some of the brightest spirits and the keenest intellects that our race has produced. But the department to which I refer is deeper and more subtle than any of those which have found their way into books and professorial chairs. The reason is not difficult to seek. The economies which have received recognition are all more or less concerned with money and material wealth. Money can be counted and possessions can be expressed in terms of money. The economy of which I write deals with something that is invisible, that cannot be weighed and measured, but which may, nevertheless, be estimated, and which is of a value transcending all the rest.

Vitality is the energy of life. It is the invisible force which keeps the universe in motion, and which keeps in motion the microcosmic universe of our material body

and the sphere of activities which surround it. Our chemistry professors tell us much about the conservation of energy in all that happens in the physical world. In the economy of nature nothing is lost: energy may change its form in a myriad ways, but the sum total of energy is neither lost nor diminished. So in the play of forces which make up our material bodies and their activities, energy is not lost, but it may be squandered or so badly economised and improperly proportioned that the physical organism suffers in consequence, and may be drained of power to such an extent that it is no longer capable of housing its tenant.

As the whole life of a physician is spent in a ceaseless endeavour to keep bodies and souls together, it is not likely that he can subscribe to a doctrine which describes our bodies as "vile." On the contrary, the human body is an instrument of such extreme beauty and value, that the very utmost should be made of its powers and possibilities. But in order that this may be the case there must be no vital waste. It is because I am constantly meeting with cases of ill-health and bodily disabilities directly traceable to vital extravagance, often quite

innocently and ignorantly committed, that I am impelled to point out some of the directions in which the leakage of vital energy takes place.

The human organism possesses a very wide range of adaptability. It is capable of existing in a state of health and efficiency under all kinds of conditions and in all kinds of climates. But in order to do this the different conditions must be carefully observed and allowed for, and this is where the economics of vitality come in. Nansen and his companions in the dash to the North enjoyed perfect health. But if they had attempted to carry out the refinements of ordinary city life, they would have come to grief in a very short time. They knew how to economise their vital forces, and were equal to every call that was made on them. Perfect health means having the body ready for any and every emergency of life. That few of us attain this pitch of efficiency is an indication that there is something wrong somewhere in our vital economics. Hence my plea for giving to this subject the position it deserves in national and human education.

Tennyson has told us something about it

being possible for one good custom to corrupt a world. This meets many exemplifications in the world of vital economics. Customs which are often very laudable in themselves are followed without any sense of proportion, and open the flood-gates of individual and national vitality. What can be more excellent than exercise, the cult of the open air, the virtue of cleanliness and the daily bath? Nothing can be better, I reply; and yet there are times when indulgence in any of these may cause such a waste of vitality that life-long injury to the body may result, if not death itself.

I have often had occasion to utter a word of warning against the danger of being enslaved by Words and Phrases. The Tyranny of Words is one of the worst forms of despotism of which I have any knowledge. The world at large and the medical profession in particular are abject devotees of words and phrases. The "pores of the skin" is a phrase at the shrine of which many feeble folk are sacrificing the last flicker of their energy in the daily morning tub. "Plenty of fresh air" is another tyrant which has claimed numberless victims. It is necessary to bear in mind that everything

in this sublunary sphere is *relative* and nothing is *absolute*. No matter how good a thing may be for some people, or even for most people, it is not good for everybody. When patients of mine are troubled with kind but officious friends, each singing the praises of his own particular curative deity, I advise them never on any account to succumb until they have resolutely shut out all their friends' pleadings and *used their own judgment*. If people would only use the light of their own judgment and intuition, they would be right ninety-nine times out of a hundred, whereas if they listen to people who are worshippers of one or other of the catch-phrases of the day they will be just as often wrong.

In the chapters which follow I shall have frequent occasion to run a tilt against some of these catch-word deities, which mankind in general find it so much more easy to serve without question than it is to get behind the words and phrases and discover the facts for themselves.

CHAPTER II

THE BATH

“It is incident to physicians, I am afraid, beyond all other men, to mistake subsequence for consequence. ‘The old gentleman,’ says Dr. Lucas, ‘that uses the cold bath, enjoys in return an uninterrupted state of health.’ This instance does not prove that the cold bath produces health, but only that it will not always destroy it.”—DR. JOHNSON (Review of Lucas’s *Essay on Waters*).

THAT cleanliness is next to godliness everybody knows; indeed, the Englishman interprets the “next” to mean first in order, godliness coming next after. Far be it from me to say he is in error; but I am compelled to point out that the bath is not the only means of keeping oneself clean, and that with the delicate a bath is often a vitally expensive luxury which they positively cannot afford. I once lost a very good patient—one who was always ailing,

though not dangerously ill—by cutting off his daily morning tub. I explained to him that his bath was taking too much out of him, and that in future he must be content to do his ablutions *en détail* instead of *en gros*. He saw the force of my reasoning and followed my advice. He grew strong and put on weight and astonished his friends by the amount of his physical endurance. He was lost to me as a patient, but he is not ungrateful, and it is one of his delights to shock his friends by telling them how many years it is since he had a bath!

There are a number of interesting points about the skin which are not generally realised. The animal organism is an electric battery. Human beings cannot give shocks like a torpedo-fish or a conger-eel, but the living human body is a battery all the same, and some persons can make the force of their current perceptible to others. A strongly magnetic person by taking the hands of another can give electric shocks which are plainly felt in the nerves and muscles of the arms of the second person. Now the skin completely closes the organs and tissues of the body, and the skin is a non-conductor. The skin is therefore a

highly important insulatory covering. But water is a very good conductor, and immersion in water deprives the skin of some of its insulatory powers. This results in the escape of bodily electricity. Strong persons have enough and to spare, and so they do not notice the loss; but it is different with the weakly and debilitated.

Further, an important part of the skin's anatomy is a set of glands whose function it is to secrete a lubricating material. This makes the skin soft and supple and at the same time increases its non-conductivity. Too much soaping and scrubbing removes this and leaves the organism imperfectly insulated and much more sensitive to atmospheric changes than if it were present in normal amount. Long-distance swimmers know all about this, hence the care they take to oil themselves thoroughly before they start on their swims.

Again, the skin is a self-cleansing organ. Its surface is composed of flattened cells resting on other cells which are less and less flattened the deeper we go into its tissue. The uppermost layer of cells is constantly though, for the most part, imperceptibly coming away. Now by soaking in water,

I mean by staying in a bath, these surface cells absorb water, swell up, and die. One has only to rub oneself after a bath and they come off in little rolls. These do not consist of dirt, as is the popular idea, but of dead skin-cells. I often tell people that it is quite possible for them to *wash themselves dirty*. They remove so much of the protecting surface that they give the dirt a real chance of getting *into* their skins ; before this it could only lie on the top. The skin of the parts of the body which are constantly exposed to the air and to contact with implements of labour becomes specially adapted to these conditions, and these can bear without injury an amount of washing that is injurious to the parts usually covered.

Sea-water bathing and brine baths are different from fresh-water baths. 'Salt water is itself magnetic and does not tend to rob the body of its magnetism as plain water does ; nor is it such a violent solvent of the external cells of the skin. But for all that salt baths do take some energy away and do not put any in. It is sometimes imagined that sea bathing is very refreshing and invigorating. In a way it is so ; but it does not put energy into one in the same way

that a good meal does. I always advise those who ask me about sea bathing to take their swim in the forenoon and *not to do anything else* on that half of the day. It is not at all wise to take a swim in the sea and on the strength of the energy derived from this to take a lot of exercise on the top of it. If the bath is made the sole business of the morning there will be plenty of energy after lunch for anything in the way of exercise that may be desired. After a sea bath there should be a rest and a meal before anything like energetic exercise is indulged in.

This brings me again to the question of soap. I find many people imagine that it is necessary for their salvation that they should not only plunge bodily once a day into water, cold or hot as the case may be, but that they must scrub themselves all over with soap every time they do it. This is a very effective way of disinsulating the magnetic machine and depleting the individual of vital energy. Soap is necessary for the exposed parts, but for delicate skins and for those which have a tendency to be dry, soaping every day is a perfectly unnecessary measure. Many people to whom

I have explained this have felt the benefit of foregoing it.

I do not deny that there are many people who attribute their immunity from colds to the practice of taking a cold bath all the year round ; but these are only a minority, and for the most part they are of the strong. With the vast majority of those who are not robust the morning cold bath makes them susceptible to colds instead of hardening them against them. That in some it acts otherwise only confirms the maxim that what is one man's medicine is another man's poison. Although the morning cold bath is felt as a great reviver at the time, the effect is transient, like that of a stimulant, and for the rest of the day the amount of energy is not increased but diminished.

A fairly effective substitute for a bath may be obtained by folding a towel, wetting the centre of it and then passing it rapidly all over the body. This will "open the pores" sufficiently without entailing any shock to the organism or lessening the skin resistance. Those who are extremely sensitive to cold may substitute for water Spirit of Wine. A small quantity may be poured into a saucer and the body rapidly sponged

with this. It dries almost instantly and leaves the body more resistant to cold instead of less resistant, as water does. Pure alcohol must be used for this; methylated spirit will not do, it is too unpleasant. Or a mixture of Eau de Cologne and hot water may be used in the same way for a sponge down.

The question of climate in regard to bathing is a very important one. Dwellers in hot countries, whose skin is constantly in action, can take baths with impunity much more frequently than those can who live in colder regions. This is a fact which it is very necessary to impress on many Anglo-Indians. It is a very common mistake made by those who have lived long in the tropics—especially young people—to think when they come to this country that they may almost live in baths, as they had been accustomed to do before. They very soon find their health give way in some form or other if they do not change their habits in time.

Children, and especially babies, are great sufferers from the bathing fashion. Delicate babies are kept perpetually delicate or are washed away altogether because their nurses

or parents think it absolutely essential that they should be dipped in water once, if not twice, a day, and then wonder why it is they are never well. A lady patient of mine was recently staying with some friends who had one little girl who was exceedingly delicate and always in the hands of a well-known specialist for children, Sir X. Y. Asking about the child, she was informed that no pains were spared to make her stronger, and that she had a hot bath at night to open the pores of the skin, and a cold bath every morning to close them up again. The child, it is true, did not like the bath, and shivered a long time after it—but it was the only thing to harden her. The visitor, with great diffidence, mentioned that there were some doctors who did not advise cold baths for all children. When she returned home from the visit she copied a passage out of a small work of mine on colds, and sent it to the mother of the child. A little time afterwards a letter came from the mother thanking her most warmly for the suggestions she had made. The morning cold baths were discontinued, and the child promptly got well. Sir X. Y. lost a patient in the same way that I lost mine, only in his

case the loss was accidental—in mine it was suicidal!

In numberless instances the same thing has happened: in fact, in many cases, medicines are useless so long as vitality is being sapped by the daily bath. The good old-fashioned rule of the Saturday-night's tub is a very excellent one for the majority of people, young and old. Of course, something depends on circumstances and places, but I speak of average conditions in our climate.

But even in the grimmest of conditions the bath is not always a necessary or even a safe thing. A medical friend of mine has put on record a case of cerebro-spinal meningitis which he was called in to see in the chemical manufacturing district of Lancashire. Not a blade of grass nor a leaf is to be seen in the vicinity. The patient, a child of eight looked as if he had been taken out of the gutter and put straight into bed. The boy was nursed by his father, a chemical worker, in his dirty clothes, who did not leave the bedside for days. The child recovered, and the doctor asks, "Why?" He gives the first place of honour to his remedies, but the remedies could not have done their work but

for the second advantage which the child had—"the child was left alone in its so-called dirt; no outward drawbacks by way of the everlasting washings and changings, or, in other words, 'making comfortable,' as would have been enforced if it had been any other person's child." I entirely agree with the doctor. In cases of extreme danger a bath is often quite sufficient to make all the difference between death and recovery. There will be plenty of time to wash and tidy up when all danger is over. I know quite well that there must be rules and regulations in hospitals; there must be cleanliness and ventilation; but I am none the less certain that the rules and regulations prove fatal to many a member of the "great unwashed," who is brought into hospital critically ill, and whose chances would be infinitely better if the rules could be allowed to wait.

The labouring classes could not afford to take baths every day. Their bodily exertions increase the activity of their skins, and the more active the skin is the more it cleanses itself. They could not perform their daily labours if they indulged in the luxury of a bath every day.

A well-known baronet of the West of England had a coachman of whom he was particularly fond. He also had very strong notions about the necessity of keeping "the pores of the skin" open, and taking a daily tub. The incident I am about to relate was told me by the baronet's son, and he is my authority for the details. One day Sir A. B., when visiting his stables, happened to see John, the coachman, with his sleeves turned up, and observed a very clear line of demarcation above the part where John's arms had been in water. Sir A. B. was shocked, and thereupon, in the kindest way possible, he pointed out to John how seriously he was imperilling his health by leaving the pores of his skin choked up, as they evidently were (so he thought), with dirt. John, who worshipped his master, went off there and then and gave himself a warm bath, carefully removing all lines of demarcation which could offend his master's eyes. But the bath was fatal to John. He took to his bed at once, and was dead within a week.

A word of warning must be given against the dangers of the bath in convalescence. A patient who has recovered from a serious

illness will often importune his doctor to let him have a bath. He has probably been looking forward to it for days as a great treat in store. If the doctor yields an hour before the patient is ready for it the gravest danger will be incurred. Many and many a time a premature bath has proved the occasion of a fatal relapse. And this all because people do not understand what a vital expense a bath entails. It just dissolves out of the patient the last modicum of strength that was required for his recovery.

CHAPTER III

FRESH AIR

"It is my pleasure to walk forth and air myself a little."—MIDDLETON.

IN these days of open-air cures for consumption and nature-cures for nerves, the importance of fresh air is in little danger of being under-estimated. Whereas our forefathers were wont to take every possible precaution to shield all who were troubled with coughs from the assaults of fresh air, we now insist on open windows night and day, and, whenever it is possible, we send our consumptives to mountain-tops and keep them in sheds without windows of any kind, and leave them exposed, winter and summer, to every breeze that blows.

And, not content with fresh-air cures for consumption, in which the air is breathed, the patients' bodies being protected with

abundance of clothing, we have learned that fresh air is good for something more than breathing, and that fresh-air baths are just as good as fresh-air douches for the lungs. Hence the establishments now springing up in various parts, where conditions are favourable, enabling the worn-out victims of modern life to recuperate their forces by a return to natural conditions of a life in the open air, freed from the embarrassments and encumbrance of clothes.

“So forth they marchen in this goodly sort,
To take the solace of the open aire,”

—as Spenser has it. Fresh air to breathe, fresh air to bathe in, with sunlight added when sunlight can be had—this is the newest panacea for the numberless ills of modern life.

Truly there is more in the air we live in and live on than anybody hitherto has had a conception of. Our scientific authorities have found out a few of them. In the days of our youth we knew very well that with every breath inhaled we took in a certain amount of oxygen, a certain amount of nitrogen, and an uncertain amount of carbonic acid gas—and that was all. Now, with our

every breath we take in all these with argon, helium, and goodness knows how many other elements besides—not to mention germs morbid and beneficent without end. It is always safe to conclude in reference to any science that the unknown immeasurably exceeds the known, and we may, therefore, be quite certain that there is a vast deal more in the air we breathe than the scientists have yet revealed, or even hinted to us. For anything we actually know, there may be in the air we breathe vitality enough to feed us, if we could only learn how to appropriate it.

But granting all that, I am not at all certain that we are not in danger of overdoing the fresh-air business at the present time. We are not all the victims of the tubercle bacillus, or of nerve exhaustion. For the majority, an average amount of fresh air is sufficient to keep the bodily machinery in going order. But it is the way of the world to run after new things or new fashions, and as the fresh-air cure has been—rightly enough—very much boomed of late years, a large number of persons have come to the conclusion that fresh air is the proper remedy for anything and everything, regardless of circumstances and conditions,

and that it is impossible to have too much of it.

One result of this has been the evolution of what I may term the fresh-air maniac. Many of us are acquainted with him. To all outward appearance he is a perfectly sane and harmless paterfamilias. But watch him carefully, and you will observe several things. He is always opening windows which everybody else in the house wishes kept closed. He insists on his children being kept out of doors for hours together when they are quite unfit for it, the result being that materfamilias is never without a nursing job on her hands. But this in no wise turns him from his obsession: whenever he can possibly make other people uncomfortable or ill, by the way in which he administers to them doses of fresh air, he will not fail to do it. The more fresh air people have, he argues, the less sensitive they will be to chills. Salvation by fresh air is the gospel of his mission, and he is fully convinced that he is embarked on a wholesale life-saving effort.

Not long ago, a well-meaning and benevolent fresh-air maniac gave a gratuitous piece of advice to a dear friend who had just recovered from influenza. "Now be sure,"

he said, in his impressive way, on parting from his friend, "be sure to get plenty of fresh air." The friend, duly impressed, took the advice. It was in the cheerful spring weather of our climate. Too weak to walk, he hired a taximeter cab and went for a drive on Hampstead Heath. A fresh east wind caught him, pneumonia followed, and in a few days he was carried off into an untimely fresh-air grave.

Now I contend that advice given in this way almost amounts to a breach of the liberty of the subject. This is especially the case when the adviser is in a position of patron to the advised, and the advice cannot be refused without giving offence. However well-intentioned the advice, the consequences are none the less deplorable.

There are numbers of innocent methods of shuffling off this mortal coil, and among them each individual has a well-recognised range of choice. If A likes to contract a mortal disease by excluding fresh air from his dwelling, it is not B's business to endeavour to save his life by forcibly or surreptitiously opening his windows. There is an old saying, "You should always let a man go to the devil in his own way." If you try

to interfere, or to substitute *your* way, he will in all likelihood get there much more quickly, and will be much less likely to find his way back again. In the same way, in this free country, I hold to the maxim, "Die and let die." If any one chooses the fresh-air method of departing this life, by all means let him take it ; but let him respect the right of other people to choose their own methods for themselves.

Fresh air has its victims no less than foul. The tubercle bacillus does not enjoy fresh air, it is true, but there are plenty of other bacilli which rejoice in it. If consumptives thrive out of doors, the subjects of bronchitis are generally only safe when they stay in. Many elderly people who cannot migrate with the swallows to Southern climes live and flourish by staying indoors six months out of the twelve.

The fresh-air mania is even more disastrous when medical men are its victims than when it affects amateur advisers only. Many a patient, after having passed through a desperate crisis, has been thrown back into a fatal relapse by too great a hurry on the part of his doctor to give him the "benefit" of

fresh air. There is such an appearance of progress about "the first drive" that a medical man is often sorely tempted to sanction, or order, the plunge. In nine cases out of ten no exact directions are given for the length of time to be out, or the distance to be traversed, the fresh air being supposed to possess such vitalising properties that it is bound to counteract any possible effects of fatigue. This is a grievous error. In the cases of which I am thinking, the very fact of putting on outdoor dress is a fatiguing process, and by the time the patient has got into the carriage, or bath-chair, the little reserve of strength is all gone, and the fresh air has an exhausted patient to work on, and consequently can do no good. In many a case the first drive after an illness proves to be the last.

Fresh air obtained at the cost of fatigue can do no manner of good. A certain amount of strength and vigour is needed in order to appropriate its benefits. To send persons out into the fresh air when their forces are already spent is to subject them to serious risks without any possibility of doing them positive good. The indiscriminate order of "plenty of fresh air" by medical men

is the source of untold mischief. I have known persons whose daily avocations drained the last ounce of their available energies, exhaust themselves to the point of a breakdown in efforts to get fresh air ordered by their doctors, when they would have done themselves a thousand times more good by going to bed. Fresh air is an admirable thing ; but those who would reap its benefits should themselves be fresh.

CHAPTER IV

EXERCISE

"Comme c'est fatigant, pensa Manicamp, d'avoir à la fois besoin de son esprit et de ses jambes."—*Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*.

THE human body is, as I have already pointed out, an instrument of exquisite adaptability, and is capable of existing and acting under conditions the most diverse. For the most part the adjustment-gear is self-acting, one organ taking on the brunt of the work under one set of conditions and other organs under their opposite: or, the sensations produced by altered conditions may themselves dictate the necessary changes of habit. But there is also plenty of scope for the exercise of intelligence in adapting the body to new conditions. And it is just here where errors are liable to be made. People run away with the notion that their bodies

cannot be considered healthy unless they are capable of doing all kinds of work at the same time. A man in an office thinks there is something wrong with his constitution unless he has a muscular development fit for a navvy, or is capable of carrying pianofortes about single-handed like Mr. Sandow.

Now it seems to me that the cult of muscularity in this country is very much overdone, to the great detriment of the bodily organisation of young and old. "Exercise" has become a fetish word ruling us to our perdition. I entirely agree with M. Manicamp in Dumas' *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* when he exclaims, "How fatiguing it is to have need of one's wits and one's legs at the same time!" It is not only fatiguing, it is detrimental to the quality of the work put out. I made this discovery practically for myself long ago when under a great strain of literary work—in addition to the claims of my practice—which lasted for some years. During the period when the strain was at its greatest I avoided even the smallest unnecessary amount of muscular exertion. When, for example, I had to dine at my club, which is only a stone's throw from my home, if I

did not take a cab both ways I was not able to do the same amount of work as if I rode. So I took M. Manicamp's hint and spared my legs for the good of my brains, and was thus able to keep in perfect condition and finish my task.

It is true that there are numbers of people who are quite capable of doing all the brain-work that is required of them and of taking plenty of muscular exercise at the same time; but so far as my observation goes the majority of brain-workers have not the necessary exuberance of vital energy to enable them to do both. When they can get a time free from brain-work, then they may indulge in muscular exercise as much as they like so long as they give themselves time to rest before the brain-work begins again. But even then it is not always the wisest policy to plunge into exertion as soon as the strain of brain-work is off.

A patient of mine once told me that the best holiday he ever had was spent in a way that would shock the average British mind, which cannot conceive of a rest that is not a change of occupation. My friend hit on a brilliant idea. He selected a seaside retreat on the south coast—I refrain from naming

it, for fear it should become too popular—which was the most relaxing spot he could think of. He went there. It was so absolutely relaxing that he could not get up energy enough to exert himself in anywise. After a stay of two or three weeks he returned to London completely rested and thoroughly set up. The air of London was bracing to a degree in comparison with that of ———.

The ordinary British idea of a holiday is hard labour of some description or other—climbing mountains, fishing in Norway, clambering over moors with a gun after game. Motors and sea-voyages are doing something to mitigate our national passion for over-exertion; for it is impossible to do much when sitting in a motor, provided one is not one's own chauffeur, and such exercises as are possible on board ship are not likely to give rise to over-strain.

Before leaving the question of legs *versus* brains I should like to say a word on behalf of that much-suffering part of the population—the children. It very often happens that children's homes are situated at long distances from their schools, and their only means of reaching school is by walking. The

consequence is that by the time the lessons begin the little scholars are thoroughly exhausted and want nothing better than to go to sleep. If the teachers find the small brains quite impervious to learning under such conditions, I for one should not be in the least astonished. The fatigue of using legs and brains at the same time is quite too much for such mites.

The same thing is shown in another way. There are some children with very frail bodies who are perfect gluttons for book-learning. The usual advice in such cases is : "Send them into the country and let them run wild—don't let them look at a book." That is not my advice. I may mention as an example the case of a boy of six, who had been treated on this plan, with the result that he could digest nothing and was steadily losing weight. I ordered him tuition of every sort, and as much as he wanted ; but the only exercise he was to have was to be wheeled out in a chair in which he could lie at full length. On this *régime* his mental appetite was satisfied, and he began to put on bodily weight. His physical strength will develop perfectly well in time ; but in cases of this kind the body will starve if the mind is not

fed, and both mind and body will then come to grief.

But does not mental work require bodily work to balance it? Not necessarily. If the mental labour is not of such a kind as to use up all the energy there is to spare, the rest may be devoted to physical exercises, and it will be an advantage to do this. But when there is no margin left after the day's work is done there will be nothing gained but very much lost by adding bodily fatigue to mental. "But," says some one, "I can't get my liver to act if I don't have one or two rounds of golf two or three times a week." In that case it is not a healthy organism that is in question, but a diseased one. If the normal functions of the body cannot be carried on except at the cost of walking round a large field swinging a club, then there is something wrong with the economy that needs medical attention.

I have not a word to say against the Royal Game. It is a Scottish invasion which is in every way to be welcomed. It is true, I did once hear a malicious Southron say that the only object of golf, so far as he could see, was to raise a thirst for Scotch whiskey; but he was no golfer, and was therefore only

deserving of pity. But the point is this: the game as a recreation is a good institution; but the thought of *compulsion* destroys all the charm of it. To take a round of golf as one would take a dinner-pill is too degrading a thought altogether.

There is another function which golf plays in modern life which is altogether desirable. It provides a healthful substitute for the barbaric pastime of killing things euphemistically termed "sport." When man is dependent on what he can catch and kill for his daily food this kind of occupation is natural and necessary. But to make a pleasure and even a fine art of it is to outrage Awakened Humanity, which found its voice in Wordsworth's fine resolve—

"Never to blend our Pleasure or our Pain
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

Against exercise in itself I have no word to say. Indeed, I think that some of the finest traits in the British character are the direct outcome of our love of it. I can quite believe that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton. But exercise is not for everybody or for anybody under all

conditions. The indiscriminate advice to take "plenty of exercise" is just as fatal as the same indiscriminate advice to take "plenty of fresh air."

Women are often the worst sufferers from the exercise fetishism. When worn out with the thousand and one cares of a large household, by the doctor's advice—or the husband's—*materfamilias* is often hustled out at night "for a walk," under the idea that exercise is bound to do her good. Well, it is bound to do nothing of the kind: it is merely adding fatigue to fatigue.

There are some people in the world who "never know what it is to be tired"—and they are generally very proud of this. They might just as well be proud of having no sense of smell or taste or sight. They are lacking in a very necessary sense—that is all. These people will over-fatigue themselves without being in the least aware of it, and I have often seen extremely serious results from this want of the fatigue sense. When we are lacking in a necessary part of our regulative gear such as the fatigue sense it is the part of the intelligence to supply the lack. If our own sensations do not tell us

when we have done enough we have our reason to fall back upon, and we ought to use it.

One of the evils of over-indulgence in exercise in early life is seen when old age approaches. The man who in early life has used up all his spare time in climbing mountains, rowing, swimming, or other severe exercise finds himself in difficulties when he approaches the sixties. The muscles have no longer the same elasticity; the heart will not stand the strain that has been put on it in former days. The liver, which has been taught to rely on "plenty of exercise," can no longer obtain its wonted stimulus. Old age is a much more terrible spectre to one of these sufferers than it is to one who has known how to enjoy periods of rest. And if the energetic one has also been in the habit of taking alcohol—moderately, I mean—his condition at this time will be much worse than if he has not.

In speaking above about the possibility of maintaining perfect health without exercise of any kind other than is entailed by daily avocations, be they as sedentary as may be, I ought to have added that this can only

be done if care is taken in the matter of diet and especially in regard to stimulants. *No reliance whatever must be placed on the latter.* And by stimulants I mean first and foremost alcohol and tobacco ; but also tea and coffee in a minor degree. If a man can eat well and sleep well he can hardly kill himself with hard work ; but if he has to appeal to stimulants or drugs to help him out, the machinery is bound to give way somewhere sooner or later.

When I say that it is and ought to be possible to maintain perfect health without exercise, I do not wish it to be understood that I advocate this as an ideal to be aimed at. On the contrary, whenever the demands on one's energy are not of such an exigent kind, a certain amount of active open-air life is in every way to be encouraged. And when this is not possible, indoor exercise can be made to take its place. A man's dressing-room and an open window should afford space enough for all the exercise that is essential. No instruments are necessary—the limbs and trunk are all that are required. Dumb-bells, especially heavy ones, are often a snare. They tend to promote *stiffness* of muscles and movements—and rigidity of

body and mind is a prevailing weakness of the British organism. In exercise movements should be soft, smooth, slow, and as far as possible rhythmical. Anything in the way of jerky and sudden movements are much more injurious than they are beneficial. The object of exercise is to produce perfect and harmonious development, without exaggeration in any direction. A healthy mind cannot comfortably dwell in a body which is too much developed in any one direction.

CHAPTER V

STIMULANTS

"Insanire Juvat."—HORACE.

THERE is not the slightest use in denying the fact—the sensation of being “elevated”—lifted out of one’s self—is pleasant to the natural man. A friend of mine protests that the only recollection that remains to him of the classics of his schoolboy days is summed up in two Latin Grammar examples, one being the Horatian maxim which I have put at the head of this chapter—“it is pleasant to be off one’s head”—and another—*dulce est desipere in loco*—“it is sweet to unbend now and then.” My friend will persist in mixing this example with another—*dulce et decorum est desipere in loco* is the way in which he renders it. In vain I try to convince him that no Roman

moralist—not even Ovid himself—went so far as that, and that the “decorous” part of the maxim belongs to quite another sentiment—to wit, dying for one’s country. He protests that he prefers his own recollection of the passage ; and at all events, he says, it is very becoming to *him*, and he has endeavoured to live up to it.

Now I have great admiration for my friend ; there is a quite irresistible charm about his patent honesty ; and if his joints are a little stiffer, his breath—and his temper—a little shorter, and his figure a little more rotund than of yore, he is quite content to pay this sacrifice as his offering at the shrine of Bacchus.

But there are others who have no wish to pay this, or any of the thousand other sacrifices which the wine-god demands of his votaries, and for that reason I think it may be worth while to go a little below the surface and see if we can find out the secret of the almost universal craving for some kind of intoxicant which prevails throughout the world—among all races of humanity, whether civilised or not, and among poor and rich alike. Whilst I have the deepest sympathy with the aims of temperance advocates and

temperance legislators in their efforts to make it less easy for the masses to yield to the craving for strong drink, and in their endeavour to create in those who are addicted to stimulants an appetite for something better, I am in entire disagreement with the saying of the late Sir Wilfrid Lawson that "the cause of drunkenness is drink." This, of course, was his witty way of putting it, and, in one sense, it may be granted that it has some truth in it. But the poet Horace puts the matter with vastly greater truth in that tremendous phrase of his, "*Insanire juvat.*" There he reached the root of the whole matter. Life for most people is one eternal struggle to find pleasure and avoid pain : these are two schoolmasters whose presence we cannot for one moment avoid so long as we are in our senses. The only possible escape is to get out of our senses, and if we cannot rise superior to them, the readiest route to hand for the great majority is by way of the flowing bowl. Truly to the natural man it is a pleasure to be off one's head ; and it says little for the penetration of the moralists of humanity that it required "a hog of the sty of Epicurus," as Horace candidly described himself, to find this out.

This is the central fact of the matter, and until we are prepared to meet the problem here the remedies proposed are all merely playing on the surface. The natural man becomes tired of the hide-and-seek life in which he finds himself involved—perpetually seeking pleasure and hiding from pain, and perpetually finding more of the last and less of the first—and until his would-be improvers can give him a more satisfactory solution of the eternal treadmill of his life, they may spare their denunciations of the publican and the brewer. Man's highest instinct, as well as his lowest, is to get away from self—to give himself away, if you like : it is for his moral preceptors to find him a more profitable way of satisfying it than the "*insanire*" of Horace.

But all this is none of my business proper—it is with the economics of the question that I am concerned. Granted that there is a certain amount of pleasure to be derived from indulgence, and in some conditions of illness even a certain amount of good, the question now to be considered is—how much does it cost?

There is this cardinal fact to be borne in mind when considering the question : When

stimulants help you—whether it is by giving pleasure or by aiding in sickness—they help you *at your own expense*. They take out of you somewhere what they put in somewhere else. It is the old story of Balzac's terrible novel, *La Peau de Chagrin*. The wild ass's skin gave its possessor command of all his wishes ; but each wish gratified left the skin shrunk in a slight degree, until at last it vanished altogether, and the life of its unfortunate owner with it.

One of the chief difficulties of the question of stimulants is the great amount of hypocrisy that is mixed up with it. We are always endeavouring to delude ourselves into the belief that our pleasant vices are in reality virtues. We try to think when we are enjoying the flowing bowl that we are doing some real good to our stomachs, or our livers, or, to put it at the lowest, we are virtuously obeying our doctor. The doctor is certainly responsible for a large share of the drinking customs of the present day. He gives indiscriminate or indefinite advice to "take a little whiskey with lunch and dinner"—or burgundy, claret, or port, as the case may be—and the patient is pretty certain to carry out the prescription—in all probability

to the end of his days. But it is not by any means always the doctor who is most to blame. It is just as often the patient who, by some leading question, entraps his doctor into a statement which gives the patient a colourable excuse to continue his potations with a good conscience. On that account medical men cannot be too careful in giving their directions on this head. Never on any account should they give them in general terms, or without putting a period to the time for which the advice applies. For neurotic patients—for those whose self-control is in any way deficient—I hold it quite unjustifiable to order stimulants at all, except in rare conditions of acute illness.

One of the economic drawbacks to the habitual use of stimulants is the mental groove they make for themselves in the organism. One good drink demands another. The effect of one indulgence takes a something away from the tissues which makes itself felt later on, and takes form in the cry of the organism for a repetition. This is called "thirst" by its victims, but it is not thirst, for water will not quench it. Stimulation is followed by reaction—the reaction being just as much an effect of the stimulant as the

primary exaltation. The antidote to the secondary effect of the stimulant is a new dose, and thus the vicious habit is kept up, and day by day the bodily and mental fibre of the organism is being sapped. "But, doctor, I feel so low and sinking as if I really required some stimulant." This is the kind of thing that every doctor is frequently confronted with. My invariable reply is to this effect: "I do not in the least question your feeling, but the remedy you suggest is the very last thing that will do any real good." The best remedy for this state of things is medicinal treatment; but for a temporary measure something to *eat* is infinitely to be preferred to something to drink. If rest is a possibility, that may be the best measure of all. Stimulation is quite the worst solution, since it is not a solution in any real sense. It is only keeping up the vicious circle, and every turn of the wheel grinds a modicum of vitality out of the organism.

Alcohol in any and every form is an irritant to the bodily tissues. It must be got rid of in some way or other; and it irritates all the organs which are engaged in the process. Those who live an open-air life with plenty of physical exercise can consume a

larger amount of alcohol without obvious morbid results than can those who pass the greater part of their lives indoors. But this is not to say that the former can indulge with impunity: it is merely a matter of less instead of more. In some direction it is sure to tell—not necessarily in apparent bodily loss—it may be in spirituality. A clergyman was once explaining to me that indulgence in alcohol was not necessarily conducive to short life. He was himself a total abstainer, and was therefore unprejudiced in the matter; though he was weak enough to own to a liking for a certain temperance beverage “because it was a good imitation of ordinary beer.” He gave me the instance of his grandfather and great-grandfather, both of them fox-hunting parsons and two-bottle men, who invariably retired for the night somewhat the “better” for their dessert, and yet they both lived to be well over ninety years of age. I asked him if they were remarkable for their piety. “Ah!—well—no; I could not exactly say that!” was the candid reply. But what is the object in living to be a hundred years old, if you do it at the expense of leaving undone all you profess?

There is one feature of the drink question

which must not be overlooked in studying it from the British point of view. Individualism is an inherent part of the Anglo-Saxon grain, and individualism means self-consciousness. To the Anglo-Saxon the craving to get out of himself is more imperious in proportion as his individualism is developed. This is one great reason why our nation is such a drink-loving nation. *Alcohol is a social solvent.* It enables the pent-up being to get out of his prison and mingle with his fellows. As a nation we are far too serious. We cannot unbend without the assistance of something which will dissolve our mental icicles and limber up our rigid mental joints. "Come and have a drink" is one of the handiest means of starting a flow of soul; and when enthusiasms of other kinds are wanting—and it is only enthusiasm of some kind or another which can perform the miracle—the Wine-god is never far off. I am not prepared to say that on occasions the result may not be worth the cost.

Tobacco fills a similar function in our frozen society. Any man can ask another, without offence, to oblige him with a light; and a flow of soul may thereupon begin in smoke which had never occurred otherwise. But

tobacco is less expansive than alcohol. Whereas wine promotes conversation, smoke is more apt to foster a silent communion of spirits.

Of the art of the connoisseur in wines I have nothing to say. Every art is its own justification; and the faculty which some persons possess of recognising the vintage of any wine is nothing short of genius. A friend of mine had on one occasion among his guests at dinner the head of a firm which owns one of the well-known brands of champagne. Possessing in his cellar some of this particular brand of a particular date, he instructed his butler to pour out a glass of it for his guest without letting him see the label. He wished to observe the effect. It was electric. The aroma was immediately recognised by the connoisseur, who inhaled its bouquet most lovingly and at once gave the correct date of the vintage. This is positive genius, and I have nothing whatever to say against its exercise. But there was no other guest at the table who was equal to the feat.

I have spoken only of the ways in which stimulants lead directly to waste of vital

energy, even when used in what is commonly styled moderation. Of the effects of habitual excess there is no need for me to speak. Our courts of justice, prisons, hospitals, and asylums can do that. But I may say this, that in enabling a man to get away from his senses and himself, alcoholic stimulants relieve him at the same time of his power of control. The animal in him takes the lead and does with him what it will. This is pretty well summed up in the old Roman maxim, "*sine Cerere et Baccho Venus friget.*" And it may safely be said of the Love which grows cold, if it has not wine to feed its lamp, that the colder it is the better for the mortal in whose heart it makes its abode.

CHAPTER VI

TEA

“Cups that cheer but not inebriate” (?) —COWPER.

TEA and its congeners—coffee, coca, cocoa, and some others—are in a somewhat different category from stimulants of the alcoholic kind, but they are nevertheless subject to the same law of action and reaction, and are capable of asserting the same ascendancy over their devotees, and of sapping their vital energy.

Some little time ago Mr. Clarence Rook contributed a striking article to the *Daily Chronicle*, describing the very great increase in the afternoon-tea habit that has taken place in London of recent years, especially among young men. In the course of the article Mr. Rook raised a question to which I was asked by the editor of the journal if I could supply an answer.

Mr. Rook said : " Not being a doctor, I cannot say whether those long rows of young men munching toast and muffins and cake are treating their digestions with proper respect, or whether it is necessary for any one to eat between lunch and dinner. But there is the fact. London calls for tea—and London finds the response."

My answer was duly forthcoming in an article entitled "Tea-drunkenness," which excited a good deal of comment at the time.¹ As I have seen no reason to alter materially the views I then expressed, I shall embody the more important of them in this chapter. As for Mr. Rook's queries whether the young men whom he described at after-

¹ From among the numerous comments which appeared at the time I am sure my readers will thank me for reprinting the following clever verses from the pen of Mr. G. K. Menzies, which appeared in *Punch* of May 31, 1905 :—

SETTLED CONVICTIONS.

[In an article in the *Daily Chronicle*, entitled "Tea Drunkenness," Dr. John H. Clarke says, "Persons addicted to tea do not always drink it; cases occur in which the tea-habitué eats it. In one case of this kind the victim actually developed *delirium tremens*.

noon tea were doing their digestions any good, and whether they needed anything

. . . It is a moot point whether tea does not do more harm in this country than alcohol.”]

Jean, wumman, frae my earliest day
I aye misdooted tea.
In vain ye socht
To change my thocht—
The tea was no for me :
A kind o’ instinct seemed to say
Whene’er I saw your wee pot,
“Man, Tam, beware
An’ hae a care !
There’s Deith within yon tea-pot !”

A’body swore I was an ass ;
But things are changin’ noo :
In Lunnon toun
They’re comin’ roun’
To tak’ my verra view.
I canna but reflec’, my lass,
Hoo wondrous wise is Natur’
That said, “Gie oop
The pisoned coop
An’ dinna spare the craytur !”

’Tis gey an’ ill the tannin sairves
Its foolish devotees.
I’ll tell ye what
Is in the pot
Ye coddle on your knees :

between lunch and dinner, I had no difficulty in supplying a very decided negative to both. The healthy person, who can eat a breakfast, a lunch, and a dinner only injures his digestion by taking anything to eat between. If he is thirsty, a drink of water won't hurt him; but almost any other drink will, and particularly—tea. In the meal called “afternoon tea” it is not the eatables that are the essential feature, but the beverage—the stimulating tea.

There's indigestion, temper, nairves
An' drunkenness an' greetin's—
Ye little think
What sins ye drink,
My Jean, at mithers' meetin's.

Ye'll soon be seein' rats, nae doot;
But dinna wauken me
In unco fricht
At deid o' nicht
To catch the beasts ye see.
An' dinna preach to me aboot
The dangers o' the bottle!
Na, Jean; I've heard
The Doctor's word—
Henceforth I'm tea-teetottle.

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I am not referring now to that large section of the community who eat four meals a day, dining in the middle of the day, and taking tea and supper. With these "tea" is more or less a substantial meal, and whether they drink with it tea, coffee, or cocoa makes little difference. But even this meal, if it comes within a four or five hours' interval of the dinner, is a tax on the digestive powers which ought not to be risked. However, if the four-mealers dilute their tea well, and avoid the more poisonous kinds, they will not be in great danger of becoming victims of the tea habit.

By the tea habit I mean the ascendancy of the poison established over its victims. In spite of the gentle poet who sang the praises of the "cups that cheer," I maintain that the "cheering" is bought at a price, and that sometimes that price amounts to inebriation.

It would almost seem that the human animal is determined to assert his superiority over all the rest of creation by the ingenuity he displays in discovering or manufacturing pleasant poisons for himself. The great majority of mankind are the slaves to one or more poison habits. Of these habits, the

tea habit is one of the most subtle, insinuating, and injurious. It is a moot point with me whether tea does not do more harm in this country than alcohol. It does not make its victims "drunk and incapable," but it certainly does make them drunk. To be saturated with tea, to be constantly under its influence, to be dependent on it, is to be tea-drunk. The sooner Tea Abstinence societies are organised the better, and "Tea Bands of Hope" should be universal; on no consideration whatever should children be allowed to have tea. They might just as well be encouraged to smoke cigarettes.

Persons addicted to tea do not always *drink* it; cases occur in which the tea-habitué *eats* it. In one case of this kind, the victim, a woman, who ate quantities of tea, actually developed delirium tremens. This, though an exceptional occurrence, shows the power of the drug over the nervous system, and, of course, it is this power of exciting the nervous system that gives tea its attraction.

Many people do not understand how it is they have such an appetite for tea, when they have little or no care for any other meal—if we except the morning cup of tea brought up to the bedroom, without which some

would never get up at all. The reason is this. The "sinking, empty feeling," accompanied often by irritability, low spirits, and shortness of temper, means that the stimulating effect of the last dose of tea is passing off, and the stage of reaction setting in. It is just the same with the tea-drinker as it is with the alcohol-drinker, when the stimulating effect of the last dram is passing off, another must be taken to keep up the effect. Thus the vicious circle is kept up. Tea, like every other stimulant, when it helps at all, helps us at our own expense. It takes energy out of us in one part to put it in somewhere else. Hence the necessity of not allowing ourselves to become dependent on it either for our work or our comfort. Stimulants of all kinds may be very good servants on occasions, but as masters they are, as Sir Wilfrid Lawson said of alcohol, "the devil in solution." Tea belongs to a group of nerve-stimulants which enable a person to get more out of himself in the shape of mental or bodily energy than he would be able to get without them. This is drawing a bill on the bank of his nervous system, of course, and the bill will have to be met. If the emergency is a passing one, the bill will be

met by food and rest, and no great harm will be done. But this is not the case when once a habit is established. An abnormal rate of nerve-wear will then go on, and this results in a fruitful crop of cases of that latter-day fashionable complaint—neurasthenia. Allied to neurasthenia, and nearly always associated with it, is dyspepsia of the nervous or flatulent type. Tea can produce any one of these and all combined.

One of the reasons why tea enables a person to put out more energy than would be possible without it is that it arrests the normal rate of waste of the ordinary tissues. This means that the products of waste which ought to be thrown off are stored up in the organism instead. Hence it is that tea is one of the most prolific sources of gout, with its numerous progeny of ills and ailings.

Another effect of tea is to produce anæmia. Servant girls are nearly all great tea drinkers, and drinkers of the strongest kinds of tea. To this habit much of the anæmia and dyspepsia from which they suffer is due. It is the tannin which is chiefly accountable for this. For tea contains not only Thein—the active principle which has the stimulating action on the nerves—but also much tannin.

It is owing to this latter that much of its indigestion-causing properties are due. "High teas" are a digestive atrocity. Tea turns meat into leather; and all who are not equal to digesting leather should carefully avoid this mixture.

The cheaper teas, so much in use now—those which give the people "the most for their money"—contain the most tannin. A tea-taster once told me that if the infusion of these teas is left in the tasting cups for any time it will eat off the enamel. This statement has been challenged, and as I am not an authority on pottery or chemistry, I give it for what it is worth; but I do know something of the physiology of the matter, and the effect of tea on the digestion is most pernicious in a vast number of cases.

"But is not tea an excellent thing for headaches?" I am sometimes asked. Certainly it is, and very often for the headaches of its own causing. Headaches which come on for the want of the accustomed cup of tea will pass off when the tea is taken. Tea, in the same way, is an excellent thing for sleeplessness in persons who are under its sway. I know many people who are dependent on a cup of tea to send them to

sleep, just as other people are dependent on tea for keeping them awake. But if there had been no tea habit established tea would not send people to sleep. As for keeping people awake, it is all very well once in a way to use tea for this purpose; but if people habitually keep themselves awake with tea when they ought to be asleep, a nervous breakdown is certain to take place sooner or later.

I find some of the worst examples of the tea habit come from the southern colonies, and I have also met with some serious cases in Europeans who have lived in China. If a doctor is not aware of the ways of our Colonial brethren—who drink tea with *every* meal and as often as possible between meals—it is very easy for him to miss the cause of their digestive and nervous troubles.

I am not sure that there is not a reason for the tea-drinking of China and the colonies in the fact that tea-making demands the boiling of the water. Possibly the water in these countries is not as carefully filtered and watched as it is in our country, so that it may not be very safe to drink it unboiled. Drunk in the form of tea it would be sterilised as far as ordinary contamination is concerned.

Another advantage of tea which must not be forgotten is its social side. As in the case of alcohol, tea is a social solvent. If the "tea-table talk" is not quite as boisterous as the Bacchanalian chorus, it must be allowed that tea is a great loosener of the muscles of the tongue and a stimulus to the flow of ideas.

As I do not flatter myself that any remarks of mine will materially diminish the volume of the tea trade, perhaps a word or two on teas and tea-making may not be out of place.

As a rule, the pure teas of China are less injurious than the teas of other countries. By pure teas I mean those which have not been treated in any way as some of the green teas are. The blacker and rougher the infusion of the tea is the more injurious it is for the digestion. But, on the other hand, there are some people who cannot take China teas of any kind without suffering from severe indigestion as a result, whereas they can take the teas of India and Ceylon without any discomfort.

There are some points in tea-making which it may be worth while to mention.

Most people in this country think they are doing something extremely virtuous if they pour the tea straight off the leaves from the first infusion. This would horrify the Chinese as being quite too dirty to contemplate. The Chinese *wash* their tea and the first infusion is thrown away, the second being allowed to stand. When we consider how, in the process of collecting and drying, the tea-leaves must have been exposed to dust containing all kinds of microbes, the necessity of washing it is not difficult to understand. I therefore advise people who must have tea, to do as the Chinese do and *wash* it. That is, let the water that is first poured on the leaves be poured off straight away, and the next infusion be allowed to stand as long as is necessary.

Another measure that is useful is to have *two* tea-pots instead of one, and when the water has stood on the leaves long enough, let the infusion be poured into the second (heated) tea-pot, instead of letting it make a concentrated infusion by standing on the leaves.

In making tea it is not well to use water that has been boiling *long*. To boil water for a long time is to take the life out of it ; so it

should be allowed to come to the boil and no more before it is poured on the leaves.

Some people find that tea made with boiling *milk* instead of boiling water is less trying to the digestion than when made in the ordinary way. The milk softens the asperities of the tea and makes more of a food of the result than a pure beverage.

For those who really wish to be delivered from the tea habit I may say that I have found fruit a useful means of accomplishing this. The real "tea-drunkard" cannot touch an ordinary breakfast unless it is accompanied by tea. In fact, the tea is indispensable for starting the day's proceedings—the eatables hardly count.

Let such an one try a breakfast of fruit exclusively—nothing at all to drink and only fruit to eat, and preferably one kind of fruit, say oranges, apples, or pears. The fruit must be fresh, in proper condition, and *uncooked*. As much as is desired may be taken; and if it is found not sufficient to keep up the energies till lunch time, a second edition of the same may be taken about eleven o'clock.

The difficulty of the afternoon tea can be surmounted in exactly the same way. The

real tea-drunkard is most ungenial and unsociable in the afternoon hours until the tea-pot appears, when the atmosphere at once lightens. A meal of fresh, uncooked fruit will soon take the place of afternoon tea for all practical purposes, and deliver its victims from the tyranny of the tea-pot. The ill-temper of the early hours of the afternoon will then become a thing of the past.

The great thing to be avoided in making use of any of the pleasant poisons which are so fatally attractive to the human race, is the *habitual* indulgence in them. As soon as they are evidently becoming a necessity to any one it is time to make a vigorous stand. Every one should be able to do without any one of them or all of them, and a good way of testing the amount of power they have over one is to leave them off entirely for a time.

CHAPTER VII

COFFEE

“And sip of a drink called Coffa in little china dishes, as hot as they can suffer it.”—SANDYS.

BEFORE quitting the subject of drinks altogether, it may be useful to say a word or two on tea's companion beverage—coffee. Coffee, like tea, has the property of keeping the brain in a state of activity and enabling those who take it to do without sleep. It has also the same power of sustaining physical exertion. Indeed, in this last respect it is superior to all others. When a great physical strain has to be endured on insufficient food or rest, coffee is the best of all stimulants to carry one over the crisis.

But coffee differs from tea in many respects. It approaches more to a food

than tea does, and it is not nearly so trying to the digestion as is tea. Indeed, coffee more often helps digestion than hinders it. When men have dined "not wisely but too well" and have taken into their stomachs a large assortment of miscellaneous foods and drinks, there is nothing so effective as coffee in harmonising the conflicting ingredients and enabling the suffering stomach to cope with its task.

I think coffee effects this by virtue of its properties as an antidote. Improper foods, or improperly mixed foods and drinks, are poisons, and coffee is an antidote to a large number of poisons, especially of the vegetable kingdom, and among them are opium, alcohol, and tobacco.

It frequently happens in our eating and drinking that our tastes naturally suggest combinations of foods which have a reason for being taken together independently of the gustatory sense. Why, for instance, do we take pepper with green vegetables? "Because we like it so" will doubtless be the reply. True; but is there a reason deeper than our liking, and possibly regulating it? Yes; there is. As everybody knows, green vegetables, wholesome and

necessary as they are, have a flatulent tendency. Well, *pepper antidotes that*.

Why, again, do most men like coffee with their cigars? The flavours mix well, it will be said. True; but coffee also antidotes tobacco and so lessens its poisonous effect on the organism. This is one of the ways in which Dame Nature takes care of her school-children and saves them from hurting themselves as much as they otherwise would. "*Pecca fortitur*," said Martin Luther: and in physiology it sometimes happens that the man of two vices comes off better than the timid man who has only one. Alcohol antidotes tobacco, and this is why whiskey and cigars so often go together, and the combination is less injurious than either taken singly.

But I am not advocating either vice—or the two combined, with antidotal coffee as the servant-in-waiting. As a servant coffee is excellent and in its place indispensable; but coffee is no better as a master than any of the rest.

The incidence of the coffee poison is chiefly felt in the head and the heart. A patient of mine, the daughter of a coffee-planter, who had been reared on coffee, almost, as other children are reared on milk, developed a con-

dition of heart—excessively rapid beating—which was attended with extreme danger to life. After years of abstinence from coffee, whenever she ventured the slightest return to her old love, an attack of this kind was sure to follow.

My own experience may not be without interest. As a boy, though I liked coffee, I could never take it without paying for it with a headache. During a visit to France I did as the French do, and took the usual *café au lait* to start the day with. The result of this was that I developed a tolerance of coffee and afterwards was able to take it whenever I liked. As coffee is an excellent thing for keeping one awake, and as a meal has a tendency to produce the opposite effect, I found it, as many other people do, a useful plan to take a cup of coffee after lunch and dinner. This I kept up for a number of years.

But at last coffee began to demand its toll in a way that I did not like. I began to be troubled with attacks of giddiness which I could not account for until my suspicion fell on the coffee. In order to put it to the test I gave up coffee, and the giddiness disappeared very soon. But since that time

I have occasionally taken a cup of coffee, with the result that exactly twenty-four hours afterwards I have had the coffee-headache which I remember well of old.

Thus coffee follows the general rule. It is an excellent servant, but a bad master. Whenever it threatens to become a necessity it should be abandoned without delay.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF WORRY

"To die of grief is a luxury reserved for the rich : a washerwoman with twelve children to keep could not afford it."—DR. JOHNSON.

"Grief is a species of idleness."—IDEM.

OF all the methods of frittering away vital energy there are few, if any, which can equal the indulgence in worry. By worry I understand useless regrets for follies or troubles past, present, and to come, and especially for those which never will come. When troubles and difficulties arise it is impossible to escape a certain degree of anxiety and thought. But this thought should be used up in the effort to grapple with the troubles and to find a way through them. This is not worry—this is action. Worry is the ceaseless grind of care which is allowed to go on in the mind and brain, and which

leads to no purpose or outlet. Worry is credited with being a prolific cause of cancer, and I can well believe it. There is nothing more lowering to the bodily nutrition than the frittering away of energy in a perpetual and profitless round of regrets.

There are "worriers" in the world of two distinct types—those who shed their worries on anybody and everybody whom they can persuade to listen to them; and those who keep their worries to themselves. With the former type I am not much concerned here; their worries never hurt them much—they are purely superficial, and glance off themselves to alight on friends and acquaintances, to the very great boredom of the latter. It is those who keep their griefs to themselves who are in the greatest danger, if they do not know what to do with them; and it is in the hope that I may give them a suggestion or two which they may find useful that this chapter is written. In naming these two types it must not be forgotten that there are plenty of degrees between the extremes, and that the two types are often mixed.

In my school days one of the best lessons I ever learned was given me out of school hours. It was on a holiday in the

summer-time, and the boys were taken for a trip on a river-steamer. The river was tolerably broad, and deep enough in the middle for heavy barge traffic. The bigger boys were soon in the water, and one of them, with more courage than discretion, undertook to find out how deep it was. No sooner was he well under water than he lost his head and began to flounder helplessly. Boy No. 2 swam out to him, and then the pair began to manœuvre for positions, which No. 1 settled by gripping the shoulders of No. 2 from behind. As it happened this was the very best thing he could have done, for it left No. 2 free to use his limbs. But the weight was more than one could carry, and the pair were soon under water. Profiting by the mistake of No. 1, No. 2 kept his head, and, bidding a hasty farewell to hearth and home by the way, struck out under water with all his might for the nearest bank—which was the one opposite to the bank they had left. Presently they reached the bottom of the river, and No. 2 gave a tremendous kick, which sent the pair on the return journey to the top. Arrived there they took in a huge draught of air, mixed with water, and prepared for

another descent. Happily there was no need for this, for the next instant No. 2's foot was on solid earth, and nothing remained for him to do but to drag his burden and himself up on the dry bank. For No. 1, be it said, he had done his part—he held his grip without interfering with the other's movements. If No. 2 had had to devote any energy to holding up his companion the pair must have drowned before the bank could have been reached.

In after life I have often had occasion to be grateful to the lesson of this incident—the lesson, namely, that *it is possible to swim under water*. The same lesson may also be put in another way : Never waste an atom of energy in worrying so long as there is a single step to be taken or a single thing to be done. No matter how deep the water above you may be, so long as there is a particle of strength left make use of it in efforts to reach your goal. Your head may possibly come to the surface, and then you may find yourself in a position to take advantage of the work done in the dark.

When we come to analyse it, nine-tenths of the power of worry for mischief is derived

from an exaggerated sense of self-importance. One of our prevailing national weaknesses is the vice of seriousness—we take our pleasures seriously, or, as our friends across the Channel say, sadly ; and we attach the same note of seriousness to all the little incidents, especially the unpleasant ones, which belong to our personality. For worries of the same degree of magnitude, or “parvitude”—if I may be allowed the word—happening to other persons do not affect us in anything like the same degree. I once heard of an old Scotch lady who had many afflictions on which she set great store, and who exclaimed when the death of a lady friend was reported to her—“Ah! *she* was never half so bad as I am.” And this is usually the case with worriers—mistakes, peccadilloes, follies, misfortunes, or whatnot—their own troubles are measured on a scale which is quite different from that with which they measure those of other people. They see their own worries, their own stupidities, through a magnifying-glass, and reverse the glass when looking at those of others. It has sometimes the appearance of an excess of modesty, but it is not really that. “The fact that *I* have been so stupid” is the trouble—the same stupidity

on the part of Jones would have been nothing to be surprised about! This is a common frame of mind in the worrier, and it is not modesty but egoism which is the real complaint.

In dealing with persons who are afflicted with worries it is not of the least use to tell them "not to worry." This only aggravates the trouble—the more they try not to worry the greater the worry grows. When people of this class—who have worries which they would like to be rid of—appeal to me I generally advise them to act in this way. Let them first ask themselves if there is anything to be *done*. If so, let them take the first possible opportunity of *doing* it: that will divert useless brain-wear into useful purpose. If, on the contrary, there is nothing whatever to be *done* in the matter, there is another question which may be asked: "Have you devoted to the matter as much worry as it is intrinsically worth?" In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, when the matter is put in this way, it will be evident that the worrying has been already greatly overdone. But if there is absolutely nothing to be done in the matter, pass on to the next thing that offers calling for the

expenditure of thought and energy ; or else see if you cannot find some one in worse case than yourself, and try to give him a lift.

If it is true—as it undoubtedly is—that “adventures are to the adventurous,” it is certainly no less true that “worries are to the worryable.” Those who let worries take possession of them, who nurse their worries, will find a large family of them make themselves at home under their roof ; so it is very desirable to have a method of dealing with them promptly and effectually when they knock at the door. There is no object in making a casual ward of one’s mind and brain.

I would offer this as a motto to any who like to accept it—“Never grumble, never complain.” When things happen, deal with them ; don’t let events make slaves of you. Half the unpleasant things that occur are the results of our own stupidities, and the unpleasantness is, if we only knew it, the means of our cure. We are all in Nature’s school, and if we do not want to remain for ever in the kindergarten class we must be prepared to have lessons that are a little hard to learn. The very worst way of

learning the lesson of life is to be perpetually grumbling.

Napoleon made it one of his rules in life never to have anything to do with men who were unlucky. He might have made the same rule about men who are always complaining of their luck. In our country people are always grumbling about the weather ; but that is a mere habit, the weather being the most fruitful topic of conversation we possess. This is not, as a rule, serious, though I have known people who are serious even about this, and take inconveniences in the weather as personal injuries to themselves. But, letting the weather pass, inveterate grumblers are, as a rule, persons to be avoided. I would amplify Napoleon's maxim and say, "Never put yourself into the hands of a man with a grievance." The grievance may be personal or not, real or imaginary, but if a man lives on it, trades on it, or parades it, let him have it all to himself. A man with a grievance is only one degree less tiresome than a nation with a grievance. A grievance can never be exalted into the dignity of a career, and the energy wasted in grieving or worrying over it is energy lost which might have been, and

ought to have been, expended in mending it, or in relieving the troubles of somebody else.

Very near akin to worry, and not one atom less wasteful in vital energy, is bad temper. Ill-temper is a particularly unpleasant form of egoism. It assumes that the particular individual is either immaculate or of such supreme importance that everything in the universe ought to go smoothly for him whatever happens to all the rest. Of course it does nothing of the kind, but this does not by any means cure the egoist of his egoism. Instead of this he wastes his energy in making every one with whom he comes in contact uncomfortable, and in this way wastes their energy also. Nobody of less philosophic eminence than Socrates himself can really profit by an atmosphere of ill-temper. I would not advise any one to deliberately seek the discipline as he did, but I would invite all worriers, grumblers, and persons suffering from ill-temper—either their own or that of others—to endeavour to attain in some degree the equipoise of the Greek philosopher.

When every other possible remedy for the worries of life has been exhausted, there still remains one thing that everybody can do: Endeavour to take an outside view of your troubles, and see if you cannot find in them some meaning. Life is a complex piece of mathematics, it is true ; but it is well worth while to make the effort to solve it. There are many occupations less fruitful than this ; and if there is nothing else to be done—don't worry, don't grumble, but try to do this sum. For it must be remembered that the problem of a life is a sum which every man must do for himself: it is useless for him to rely on any one else to do it for him.

CHAPTER IX

VISITING THE SICK

“Defend me from my friends.”—MARSHAL VILLARS.

IN this chapter my word of warning is directed more to the guardians of the sick than to the sick themselves. Time and again I have found patients injured by having been visited by kind and sympathetic friends, before they were in a fit state to receive such visits. The friends have enjoyed themselves vastly, thinking they have performed a highly meritorious act, having cheered the patient up, and done an immense amount of good ; the fact being that immediately after they have disappeared the patient has sunk into a complete state of collapse. It is the gentler sex who are the worst sufferers from these kind attentions ; and it is their sisters also, being more sympathetic than the

male portion of the community, and having more visiting time on their hands than men, who are the likeliest to offend in this respect against the laws of vital economy.

Few persons understand the amount of fatigue that is involved to a patient in simply seeing some one who is not constantly in attendance upon him. The very effort of fixing the attention on a new mind, of listening to anything the visitor has to say, of replying and endeavouring to appear interested, is an enormous drain when vital energy is low. The visitor does not know it. The flush of excitement which is costing the patient, it may be, the last chance of life, is taken by the visitor for a wondrous improvement in his condition. This encourages the visitor, who thinks it necessary to stay still longer and complete the well-intentioned mischief.

It is very desirable that medical men should give the strictest injunctions about visitors. So long as a condition is critical they should be absolutely forbidden except under the sternest necessity. When the sick are well enough to receive visits the number of visitors should be strictly limited, and the time of the visit definitely prescribed.

Another point should be borne in mind, and that is the *personality* of the visitor. This is a matter which may entail the risk of offending somebody, but it must be faced. It is not generally known, but some people know it well by painful experience, that some personalities are absolutely poisonous to other personalities. Two persons of these antipathetic natures cannot be in the same room without one of the two being made positively ill. It not infrequently happens that two members of the same family are in this fix. I remember an instance of the kind in which the two unfortunates were sisters-in-law, the sufferer being my patient. I could always tell when she had seen the other by the state of illness induced, and at last I had to forbid their meeting altogether; and this was not on account of anything either of them did or said; it was simply the personal contact which was enough to produce disaster.

We must recur to the fact that every individual is an electric battery in order to appreciate what happens in these instances. When two persons meet in health an interchange of magnetism takes place, and in ordinary cases the give and take is equal, and

both may be the better for the meeting, each carrying something of the other's magnetism away with him. But this is not by any means always the case—one individual may be negative to the other, and in that case will absorb all the vital energy that he can take from the other. When one person is weaker than another the strong does not by any means always impart to the weak; much more frequently the strong takes from the weak the little vitality that he has. Then there is the further consideration that the *qualities* of magnetisms differ enormously. Two persons may be equally magnetic, but the magnetism of one may be so antipathetic to the other as almost to kill him. This consideration makes it extremely important in prescribing massage to choose an operator who has the right kind of magnetism for the patient. The masseur or masseuse should be of a nature which has plenty of vitality to *impart*, and one who leaves the patient rested and refreshed after the treatment. Sometimes it is just the opposite. I have known instances in which the operators practically lived on their patients. A masseuse I once heard of worked from early morn till dewy eve and *never required a meal in the*

interval. But her patients were left without an atom of strength in them after her operations, and thought her a wonderful person, as she had had such a powerful effect. The fact was that she had absorbed their vitality instead of putting any in.

To the charitable and well disposed I would give a word of advice. In visiting the sick make your visits as brief as you possibly can. If the doctor has prescribed a time, take out your watch and keep to the limit. Do not fear that the invalid will think you chary of your time; you had better risk that than the patient's well-being; and remember, the patient cannot well ask you to cut your visit short. If a visitor can really *do* something for the patient and has a restful influence, then the visit may be prolonged as long as the services are acceptable and useful; but if it is a visit pure and simple, the rules I have given had better be strictly observed.

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